



Saint Louis Audubon

Bulletin

April, 1959

Vol. 27, No. 3

Final Screen Tour of Season on Friday, April 24

Howard L. Orians Will Present

"THE LAND THE GLACIERS FORGOT"

CONSERVATION AWARD NIGHT

With Wisconsin the setting, and emphasis on the section comprising one-fourth of the state by-passed by the glaciers, Howard L. Orians of Madison, Wisconsin adds bits of geology to birds and animals in action in their native habitats in "The Land the Glaciers Forgot" — an informative nature documentary, highlighted by humor and surprise.

In the glacier-forgotten terrain, different from the surrounding territory, Mr. Orians has recorded such rarities as the boom and dance of prairie chickens at dawn; otters gliding through the lake, a fat badger peeping out of his hole; a bee somehow getting nectar out of an unopened gentian blossom, a fox cub outside his den busily scratching his ear.

The rare fun of the film is the Bird Bathing Beauty Contest — to select the Bird of Wisconsin. With tongue in cheek, Howard Orians interprets the "contest" in a wilderness pool as two hawks "judge" the qualifications of various beautiful contestants who splash and flutter in the pool: the scarlet tanager, indigo bunting, rose-breasted grosbeak, warblers, sparrows, and other participants. Naming the "winner" climaxes this amusing bit.

An ordained minister and superintendent of the Southern Wisconsin District of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the Reverend Howard L. Orians is by avocation a "serious amateur" in the field of natural history. He has excelled in studies and photographs of wildlife outside his study window, the shoreline and waters of Lake Michigan. Former president and director of the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology and active in the Milwaukee Audubon Society, Mr. Orians is a favorite photographer-naturalist with Audubon Screen Tour audiences everywhere.

Preceding the Screen Tour the Society's annual conservation award of the silver cup and student membership will be presented to recipients of these awards.

A DREAM COME TRUE

Our Society is opening a trailside museum — a Nature Center in an ideal spot, the Arboretum, as described so beautifully by Mr. Louis Brenner in this issue. Although credit is due a number of persons, it was our own Earl Hath who, at a committee meeting of Shaw's Garden Horticultural Council, of which he is a new member, asked that "the St. Louis Audubon Society be permitted the use of the gatehouse at the Arboretum as a meeting place and nature center. Support followed by Mr. Cherbonnier, former president of our Society and now president of the Council; by Mr. Went, Director of the Garden and Hugh Cutler of the Garden. After the details had been worked out, it was brought up before the Board of Trustees of the Garden, who voted, with certain provisos, that the Arboretum was for our use.

The opportunities, both present and in the future, are limitless: there will be an exhibit of interesting collections, a library, a Service Department, and about 1650 acres of trails. It is expected that part of the area will be used for day camps, and there will be workshops for all ages, under the Society's competent leaders, to study the many aspects of nature, to learn about banding and the practice of conservation. (This program to be announced at a later date).

As for the Gate House, or main office of the Arboretum, it has been cleaned, renovated (including the plumbing) and painted. The attractive fireplace will take six-foot logs . . . a haven following field trips in cool weather.

It is good to know, too, that Louis Brenner, although he works at Shaw's, lives out there and that Mr. and Mrs. Bagby (she won a National Audubon Camp scholarship in '57) live right next door to the Gate House.

Although the Nature Center will be closed daily at 5:00 p. m. to visitors, it will be open for scheduled Audubon meetings on special occasions after 5 p. m. The key will be next door.

THE ARBORETUM

Site of St. Louis Audubon Society's Nature Center

BY LOUIS BRENNER

Many features of the Arboretum make it an ideal site for a Nature Center, but perhaps the most outstanding feature is found in its great diversity. Here are found fields, brushy fields and forest; abundance of water as artificial lakes, creeks, two miles of Meramec River, and springs; there are numerous ridges and valleys with slopes facing to all points of the compass; rugged valleys draining into the Meramec River expose many rock strata, and a soil map will show soils of residual alluvial, and wind-borne origin and deposition. Such complex natural features are expressed in an unusually rich flora and has attracted many common and a great number of unusual species of wildlife.

Here in order to prepare the area for growing horticultural plant material and to make a more effective outdoor laboratory for study of plants, conservation practices have been initiated and older conservation principles applied on a large scale and to such a degree that the Arboretum has long been accepted as an outstanding example of excellent soil and water conservation.

Plants, of course, have played the dominant role in the maintenance and development of the Arboretum for the past 35 years. There has been particular emphasis on creating and improving many sorts of habitats to encourage the growing of many native plants as well as the introduction of native and exotic plants. Such great diversity of habitats is reflected in an equally great diversity of animal life.

Outstanding Features of the Arboretum

The Pinetum at the Main Entrance is an area given toward assembling a representative collection of conifers. Here maturing specimens of pine, fir, and spruce offer an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the essential differences between these important trees. Such an extensive collection as this has proven an unusual habitat in this region and winter birding here gives a list of unusual midwestern birds.

The fields of many different types, close-mowed, unmown, or a varying degree of brushiness, provide excellent areas to study plants and are especially good areas for many species of birds and animals.

Forests cover at least half of the area and are particularly rich in wild-flowers. Since no major fire has ravaged the Arboretum area in the past 35 years, the forest is in excellent condition. An outstanding number of aged trees, dead and alive, provide abundance of den trees for all species of wildlife.

Glade areas are extensive and particularly interesting as the flora of these rocky barrens is typically that of the western prairies. Here one finds an outstanding example of the close relation between underlying rock, soil and consequent plant life.

River, creek, and ponds offer a rich aquatic fauna. The lake in the Pinetum area has long been recognized as an outstanding example of aquatic balance achieved through careful maintenance of the watershed area. Aquatic birds are relatively abundant in and about the Arboretum.

To the novice and to the professional naturalist or biologist, the Nature Center at the Arboretum will become a living laboratory and class room. Here the newly interested can rapidly learn the native species of birds and animals and plants. More advanced students will learn the great significance and complexity of wildlife and the habitat. Serious naturalists and biologists, the specialists, will find in the Arboretum an excellent area in which to study the many complex problems so vital to a deeper understanding of our wildlife that we may preserve for



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all future generations the clear ringing call of the Pileated Woodpecker. the snuffling snort of deer or bleat of fawn; the moonlight wailing of the Mississippi Valley Red Wolf; Barred and Great-horned Owls hooting on clear, cold winter nights; the buzzing and the joyous bubbling voice of the Woodcock as he spirals high into the warm spring evening to charm his quiet hen; the melody of the Pine-woods Sparrow; the marvels of the Oven-bird nest; or Spring-peepers on a spring night. These we can enjoy today. Will they fit into jet and space age life, so deeply concerned with devastating square miles of habitat so as to provide cross country super-speed ways — more effective farm insect control with powerful insecticides sprayed by plane?

Time now is so very short. There is yet so very much to learn. The numbers of trained biologists are very small and wage scales, compared to current union labor rates, so meager that all too few of our younger generations are attracted to practice professionally in this important field. The burden, then, lies upon the novice, the week-end naturalist. Yet few areas are of sufficient quality and diversity to permit such extensive field study in the few week-end hours available for most of us today. This is your St. Louis Audubon Society Nature Center at the Arboretum. This is also your challenge 'mid many happy sun and rain-splashed hours.

PITZMAN NATURE PROGRAM

Our KFUE Radio Program

It is with pleasure that we announce another nature program for young people to be held this summer at Shaw's Garden — a two five-weeks' course to run as follows:

First course — June 16 to July 16

Second course — July 7 to August 20

The age group is 7-10-11-18

Leaders will be Connie and Earl Hath, Jeane Sterne, Stuart and May O'Byrne and Helen Bowman. Kenneth Peck will participate in both sessions.

* * * *

We hope that you have had some free Friday afternoons in which to tune in on the Society's radio program, "Adventures in Nature", which is aired each Friday by KFUE from 2:30 to 2:45, and has been having an enthusiastic response from listeners. The program covers subjects relating to outdoor science, recreation and conservation. Our panel consists of Rex Conyers, moderator; Dick Grossenheider, Earl Hath, Martin L. Schweig, Jr., and Eugene Wilhelm. As seasons develop, other specialists are invited to participate in the program. The basic theme which has proven to be so popular is: What is going on in the living world each week? The program is educationally important: ten elementary and two junior high schools, as well as KSLM, St. Louis Board of Education radio station, regularly tune in, and there are other schools whose teachers frequently make use of the program.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

We may seem a bit late in this case but we thought you should know that April is the natal month of John James Fougere Audubon. His birth date was April 26, 1785 and he first saw the light of day in Aux Cayls, Haiti. He was the son of a French sea captain and a native girl.

Audubon was educated in France and came soon thereafter to his father's estate near Philadelphia where he made the first experiments in bird banding in America.

Audubon travelled over much of the world and he must have seen many girls but, believe it or not, he liked those in St. Louis best for he married one, in 1808, Lucy Bakewell. She was of great assistance to him in his work and although he did paint birds primarily, there exists at least one creditable portrait which he did of his wife.

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

More than 100 citizens showed up at the U. S. Courthouse in Seattle, Washington, last week to testify for and against Hubert Humphrey's Senate Bill 1123. The bill is the third attempt in two years to create a National Wilderness Preservation System. If enacted into law it would prescribe that some 50 million acres carved from national forests, parks and game refuges, be left in a raw, wild and primitive state for "recreation, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historical use" only. The Wilderness, in the bill's words, would be one place "where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

One well known zoologist, speaking of the practical advantages of such a bill said, "Such a wilderness would be a great outdoor classroom."

ST. LOUIS AREA BIRDING

BY J. EARL COMFORT

Our 1958 bird watching within a 50-mile radius of St. Louis gave us 259 species, with only one, a Boat-tailed Grackle, considered especially rare. The Grackle was found in St. Charles County on January 4th by Alberta Bolinger, Dorothea Vogel, Hemp Hutchinson, Earl Hath and Earl Comfort. There were 22 kinds of ducks, 23 species of shorebirds, 33 in the warbler family and the same number in the sparrow-finch tribe. Only 6 avid listers succeeded in finding 200 or more species in contrast to 14 in 1957 when the top list was Dick Anderson's 251, as compared to Earl Comfort's leading list of only 229 in 1958. The previous year's total composite list of 275 species is a good example, from a lister's standpoint, of our all-around poor year last year. Other 1958 counters of 200 were Dick Anderson, Alberta Bolinger, Steve Haselmann, Earl Hath, and Eugene Wilhelm. In general, birding in the departed 1958 was well below par in numbers of individuals as well as in number of species, in spite of a near normal year, weatherwise.

January of 1959 was noted for its extreme cold waves which kept the Mississippi River above the Alton Dam ice locked, a situation favorable for Bald Eagle tabulating, the big birds having been attracted by the dead fish that the deep freeze yielded in the river's open air holes.

This also applied to gulls, with the Herring species in far greater numbers than in most winters.

Sally Springer, Steve Hanselmann and Harold Stiles got the new year off in promising fashion with Oldsquaw ducks above Alton on January 1st and 2nd.

A rare Glaucous Gull was observed near Alton on January 9 by Earl Comfort. Subsequent listers of the all-white gull were Alberta Bolinger, Dorothea Vogel, Earl Hath, Gene and Diane Wilhelm, Sally Springer and Dick Vasse.

Rarest bird of the present year was a Chestnut-collared Longspur in St. Charles County on February 14 by Alberta Bollinger, Dorothea Vogel, Earl Hath and Earl Comfort. On the following week end, Gene and Diane came up with a Red-shafted Flicker at Weber Lake, and a Harlan's Hawk at Harbor Point near Alton Lake. On the 28th our group listed a Western Red-tailed Hawk, and the following day, Dick Anderson added a Krider's Redtail to make pretty good hawking, we think.

An unusual January listing was our 17 Great Blue Herons, another a January 11 migration of some 50,000 Redwinged Blackbirds over the August A. Busch Wildlife Refuge.

One of our most interesting and exciting observations was an attack by a Bald Eagle attempting to capture a crippled Mallard duck on the Mississippi River. Although not an expert diver, the duck managed to elude the predator's many dive bomb attacks by immersion in an air hole sanctuary.

NEWS BRIEFS

Eugene J. Wilhelm, Jr., is the author of a much needed booklet which the St. Louis Audubon Society has just published; "Birds of the St. Louis Area", with the addition of "The Story of the European Tree Sparrow". One thousand copies have been printed by Hope Press — a handsome job — and sell for the minimal sum of fifty cents apiece. There are line drawings in black and white by the author, and a detailed map comprising the 50-mile radius in Missouri and Illinois. Several hundred copies have already been sold. Congratulations, Eugene, on a splendid piece of work!

Dr. Hampton Carson, Board member and zoologist on the faculty of Washington University, has recently received another grant from the National Science Foundation to continue his work on population genetics. The grant is for three years, beginning this past February, and provides salaries for full-time research assistants, equipment and an expense budget.

Rex Conyers, Board member, biology teacher and field trip leader, was a nominee for the presidency of the American Nature Study Society during the convention of the National Science Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He presented two papers "Keeping Biology in the Science Picture", to the National Association of Biology Teachers, and "Nature Study at the High School Level" before the American Nature Study Society at this convention.

Rex also participated on Sunday, March 29, in Parker Wheatley's TV Program "Challenge" on Channel 4, in a discussion of "Science in the Elementary Schools."

President Earl Hath reports a surprise via the magazine "The Camp Fire Girl", a monthly publication in which a talk of his on the St. Louis Audubon Society's blue bird trail project and booklet "The Story of the Bluebird" reached the editors. Although mistakenly referred to by its former name of St. Louis Bird Club, the inclusion of the Society's project in the article "Let's Bring Back the Bluebirds" by W. G. Duncan is good to see. The author recommended that the youngest Camp Fire Girls, the "Blue Birds", help bring back these colorful birds by making and placing nesting boxes in appropriate places.

* * * *

Leonard Hall's newest book, "Stars Upstream" published April 13 by the University of Chicago Press, is already being reviewed with high praise in the press. "Len Hall's Love Affair with the Current River" it has been dubbed — and from publicity releases there seems truth in the phrase, since the book lovingly but unsentimentally sings a song of praise for life along this Ozark River. As our readers know, Len and his wife Ginnie, with their Irish setter Tiger, travel 150 miles in their canoe year after year from the headwaters of the Current to the flatlands—and miss nothing worth seeing and hearing. It will be a privilege and inspiration to share vicariously these experiences and the splendid life-nature-and-conservation philosophy of the Halls in this beautiful book. Ira N. Gabrielson, president of the Wildlife Management Institute and former chief of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has written the foreword. Congratulations, Len Hall of Possum Trot Farm!

We have another worthy author among our Board members, too, — James Nelson of the "Christmas Tree Farm", Godfrey, Ill. We hope that all our members have seen or will see a copy of the justifiable protest that Jim and his wife, Lorli, have written and published on the desecration by the Army for a missile base, of most of Pere Marquette State Park. We do not have the space to review this eloquent and significant appeal for conservation of such an irreplaceable wildlife and recreation area, but we recommend that you secure copies of the pamphlet and add your protest!

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COME OUT FOR SPRING FIELD TRIPS AND BIRD WALKS

Saturday, April 18 and May 2: Shaw's Garden Beginners' Bird Walks.
Leaders, Eugene and Diane Wilhelm. 8:00 a. m.

Saturday, April 25: Harris Teachers Ornithology Course. (Open to teachers in class).

Sunday, April 26: Second Forest Park Bird Walk. Meet Jefferson Memorial, 7:30 a. m.

Sunday, May 3: Spring Audubon Society census. Compiler, Dave Jones, WO 2-0906.

Tuesday, May 5: "Binoculars for Birding," talk with slides by Mr. Reichert of the Miracle Optical Co., Mt. Vernon, N. Y. Museum Building, Shaw's Garden, entrance off Tower Grove Avenue, 8:00 p. m.

Saturday, May 9: Harris Teachers Ornithology Course. (Open to teachers in class).

Sunday, May 10: Forest Park Bird Walk. Meet at Jefferson Memorial, 7:30 a. m.

Sunday, May 17: Final Forest Park Bird Walk. Meet at Jefferson Memorial, 7:30 a. m.

Saturday, May 23: Harris Teachers Ornithology Course. (Open to teachers in class).

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